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ABSTRACT

The use of the term "andragogy" to mean education of adults and the term "pedagogy" to mean education of children is etymologically inaccurate. Although pedagogy derives from "pais," meaning child, from antiquity pedagogy also has stood for education in general--without reference to learners' ages. Andragogy derives from "aner," meaning adult male and not adult of either sex. Given current efforts to purge English of sexist words, introduction of a term that excludes women is nonsensical. A new term based on the Greek could be coined. "Teleios," not aner, is the Greek word for the English "adult." Andragogy could be replaced by "teleiagogy," a term that includes adults of both sexes. (YLB)

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ANDRAGOGY AND PEDAGOGY: A Comment on Their Erroneous Usage

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Abstract

Using *andragogy* to stand for educating adults and *pedagogy* for educating children is etymologically inaccurate. Although pedagogy derives from *pais*, meaning child, from antiquity pedagogy also stands for education without reference to learners' ages. Andragogy derives from *aner*, meaning adult male, not adult of either sex. Given the efforts to eliminate "sexist" words, why introduce a new one? We would be served better by using English than by using etymologically inaccurate Greek. If Greek is desired, *teleios*, not *aner*, is the Greek word for the English "adult." Andragogy should yield to teleiagogy, thereby including adults of both sexes.

Andragogy and Pedagogy: A Comment on Their Erroneous Usage

Those who use or coin Greek words to stand for scientific concepts and bodies of knowledge sometimes unintentionally incorporate erroneous meanings. Such is the case with the terms andragogy and pedagogy.

According to Malcolm Knowles (1987) andragogy "is a term that is now widely used around the world as an alternative to pedagogy" (p. 169) when referring to teaching adults. Knowles' influential work on the ideas conveyed by these two concepts has led to their extensive use in the literature on adult education and training. Although andragogy is not listed in the Merriam-Webster or Oxford unabridged dictionaries, it does appear in *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* second unabridged edition (1987). It has the meaning "methods or techniques used to teach adults (Andr-+(ped)Agogy)."

This note is not addressed to the substantive issues that Knowles and other scholars associate with andragogy and pedagogy. It is aimed only at clarifying the etymology of these two terms.

Quoting from Knowles (1987):

> All formal educational institutions in modern society were initially established exclusively for the education of children and youth. At the time they were established there was only one model of assumptions about learners and learning--the pedagogical model (derived from the Greek words *paid* [sic], meaning "child," and *agogus* [sic], meaning "leader"; so "pedagogy" means literally "the art and science of teaching children"). (p. 168)

True, the first component of the composite word pedagogy (*paidagogeia*) derives from the Greek word *pais*, meaning child, whereas the latter component

derives from the Greek word that, in verb form (*ago*), means to teach, to lead, to guide, to attend. In noun form (*agogos*), it means teacher, leader, guide, or attendant. However, in antiquity and in later times, this, and similarly rooted terms as *paideia*, not only have meanings associated with children, but have meanings that are conveyed in English by the terms education, learning, and teaching. These meanings are not necessarily associated with children only. For example, quoting from Liddell and Scott (1968), the word *paideia* means: "1. [that which pertains to] the rearing of a child; 2. training and teaching, education; 3. its result, mental culture, learning, education;...." These same meanings are listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1961).

Despite its root in the word *pais*, in antiquity, the common understanding of the word *paideia* had to do with culture and the education not only of children but also of adults. While ancient and modern Greek differ in many usages and word meanings, they also have many similarities. The modern Greeks' Ministry of *Paideias* is not the English equivalent of a ministry which deals with the rearing of and teaching of children. It is, rather, the ministry of education.

In short, although one may accurately say that (Knowles, 1987) "'pedagogy' means literally 'the art and science of teaching children'" (p. 168), one may also use it to mean the art and science of teaching--with no restrictions on the age or sex of the recipients of the teaching.

Neither now *nor in his time* could one view Socrates' pedagogical method as fitting the assumptions of what Knowles terms pedagogical. In antiquity and early Christian times (Arndt & Gingrich, 1979), a pedagogue was not a teacher, but a man (usually a slave) having the oversight of a child, an attendant who led a boy to school and carried his satchel. Plato may well be responsible (we don't know for sure) for the metaphorical usage of pedagogue and its cognates in the sense of educator, teacher, and their like.

The *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) defines pedagogy as:

> Office of a *paidagogos*. The function, profession or practice of a pedagogue; the work or occupation of teaching, the art and science of teaching, pedagogics.... 2. Instruction, discipline, training.

The *Webster's Third New International Unabridged* (1976) definition of pedagogy has no reference to children or their education:

> 1: INSTRUCTION....2: the art, science or profession of teaching, *esp:* the study that deals with principles and methods in formal education: EDUCATION.

Quoting again from Knowles (1987):

> Early in the 1960s European adult educators were feeling a need for a label for this growing body of knowledge about learners that would enable them to talk about it in parallel with the pedagogical model, and they coined the term (or actually rediscovered the term that had been coined by a German adult educator in 1833) *andragogy*. (p. 169)

In the times and the society of the adult educator who coined *andragogy*, the term may have been appropriate. Education and teaching were privileges for men only. Such privileges were not officially offered to women. Andragogy derives from the Greek words *aner* and *ago, -gos. Aner (o, andros, andri, andra)* however, means *adult male.* It does not mean, as Knowles (1987) claims, "adult" (p. 169). Similarly, the meaning for andragogy in the Random House dictionary, quoted previously, is erroneous. The English equivalent of *andr-* is not adult; it is adult male.

The term andragogy, then, means the art and science of educating adult males. The same applies to such related terms as "andragogue," and "andragogical." They connote the education of adult men, not of adults.

Greek does not, to my knowledge, have a word that stands for what Knowles terms andragogy. It has only pedagogy. Unlike "man," which was and still is sometimes used in English to imply both sexes, the Greek word *aner* has always meant "adult male," not adults of both sexes. Unlike English, the Greek language has a distinct word intended for both sexes, *anthropos*--whence anthropology. *Aner*, then, means adult male; the word for adult female is *gyne*. In Latin and in English *andr-* or *andro-*, and *gyne-* or *gyneko-* have been used in composite words to stand for male and female, respectively. Some English examples are androcracy, gynekocracy, androgenesis, gynekogenesis. In combination, *androgyne-* is used to connote meanings associated with both sexes; for example, androgynous connotes having both male and female characteristics.

Given current efforts to purify English of "sexist" words, it makes little sense to introduce a term that, though not intended to exclude women, does precisely that. Furthermore, interpreting the Greek *andr-* as "adult" in andragogy creates a discrepancy with its usage in other English words (e.g., androgenesis) that have a male connotation.

Greek may not be a good source of words for Knowles' concepts. In Greek, *pedagogy*, and such related terms as *pedagogical*, do *not* have the meanings Knowles attaches to them. *Andragogy* excludes women. *Andragynekagogy* (or something similar to it) is a word of Greek origin that includes the education of adult men and adult women. However, besides being awkward to pronounce, this prefix inherits the tradition of previous usages, including meanings associated with bisexuality, the union of two sexes, and the like.

If one were to coin a term rooted in the Greek word *anthropos*--for example, anthrapagogy--that term would leave out any sense of age and sex. It would accurately be read as the education of people, but it would not serve as a label (Knowles, 1987) "to talk about it [adult educational model] in parallel

with the pedagogical model" (p. 169), since *Anthropoi* (plural) includes youths and children. True, one may say that (E. Keuls, personal communication, 1988) when ancient Greeks used *anthropoi* they did not have children in mind--they usually meant adult males. If so, this is yet another commentary on the adult-male-dominated nature of their society. It does not, however, alter the fact that the meaning of their word *anthropoi* includes children and youths, male and female.

How about coining the term *teleiagogy*? For the Latin *adultus* and the English "adult"--fully grown, mature--the ancient Greek word *is teleios.* (Woodhouse, 1932; Glare, 1982). The superiority of *teleiagogy* to *andragogy* is unquestionable. The root, *telei-*, cuts out any sense of gender. Those familiar with classical Greek will immediately read *teleiagogy* in the context of the education of (for) adults. Emphasizing the meaning of the word *pais* (child) in pedagogy and bypassing its broader connotation noted earlier, teleiagogy would serve better than andragogy as (Knowles, 1987) "a label ... to talk about it in parallel with the pedagogical model" (p. 169).

But there is a catch. *Teleios,* hence also the coined word teleiagogy, has semantic complexity: *Teleios* is but one derivative of *telos* (end), a word with many derivatives and meanings in Greek (Chantraine, 1968), many of them incorporated, altered, and expanded in English and other languages, especially German. Prominent connotations of *teleios* include: perfect, entire, without spot or blemish, valid, authoritative, final, accomplished, perfect in his kind, fulfilled, full, complete, and full-grown (Liddel & Scott, 1968). The many connotations of *teleios* do not necessarily argue against using teleiagogy. That *teleios* connotes both the mature as subjects/objects of education and also final, perfect, and the like as ends of education, may give it added appeal to scholars of adult education (H. Y. Williams, personal communication, 1988).

In short, if we desire to distinguish the education of adults from that of

youths and children, *we would be far better served by using English words* than by borrowing or coining Greek words erroneously. On the other hand, if we desire to maintain the tradition of utilizing Greek words to attach, in this case, a distinct label to the body of knowledge about adult learners, my search suggests that *we abandon andragogy in favor of teleiagogy which includes both sexes.*

Footnote

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